

Symmetry

by Jordanna Morgan

Category: How to Train Your Dragon
Genre: Drama, Friendship
Language: English
Characters: Astrid, Toothless
Status: Completed
Published: 2014-02-04 16:36:35
Updated: 2014-02-04 16:36:35
Packaged: 2016-04-26 17:41:55
Rating: K
Chapters: 1
Words: 2,080
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Astrid reflects on what Hiccup has lost - and gained.

Symmetry

****Title:** Symmetry**
>Author: Jordanna Morgan
>Archive Rights: Please request the author's consent.

>RatingWarnings:** G.
>Characters: Astrid and Toothless.

>Setting: Following the film's climactic battle.

>Summary: Astrid reflects on what Hiccup has lost"and gained.
>Disclaimer: They belong to Dreamworks. I'm just playing with them.
>Notes: After I wrote "Next Steps", a reader urged me to write more from the same period, when Hiccup is unconscious at the end of the movie. Upon consideration, I thought it would be interesting to explore Astrid's feelings about what Hiccup has lost. The subject also happens to fit in with the prompt physical imperfections on my Genprompt Bingo card, so here it is.

* * *

><p>When Hiccup was found alive in Toothless' grasp after the battle, the adults did not let Astrid come near him. She could sense that the joy of his survival was tempered by something anxious and"not rightâ€| but at first, no one would tell her what it was. Gobber quickly shuffled her onto a different ship, with his typical happy-go-lucky mutterings of reassurance, but she knew there was a false note to his chatter.

He didn't tell her the truth until they were halfway home. It came when she was gazing worriedly across the sunset-tinged water, her eyes fixed on the ship Stoick had commandeered, which she knew was now carrying Hiccup.

Toothless' wings, Gobber explained gravely, had indeed saved Hiccup's life. Wrapped tight around him, they shielded his body almost entirely from the inferno the pair had been plunged into; but his left boot, it seemed, had been caught outside the edge of that fireproof protection. The lower portion of his leg remained exposed to the flames—and as a result, everything below the knee was too terribly burned to be saved.

It shouldn't have felt so shocking. Between centuries of battles against dragons, and the more ordinary rigors of survival in the harsh environs of Berk, it was practically commonplace for Viking warriors to lose limbs. Many men in the village were just like Gobber, going about their lives with man-made crutches and tools in place of flesh and bone.

But this time, it had happened to someone so young!

This time, it was Hiccup.

Astrid's emotions were such a jumble after the news that she could barely think. Hiccup was alive—but crippled, with a wound so severe that he was by no means out of danger yet. Along with Toothless, he had single-handedly destroyed the greatest monster ever seen by any living Viking, and perhaps changed their entire world—but he had paid a frighteningly high personal cost.

In the end, it was really their people's stiff-necked stubbornness he was paying for. If they had only listened to Hiccup, given him a chance to share what he had learned about dragons, he wouldn't have had to suffer this.

Looking toward the ship that was bearing Hiccup home, Astrid silently promised to make it all count for something.

Above the remains of the fleet that limped back to port, the fire-colored evening sky was full of dragons. They circled and glided, skimming low over the water, darting through the orange clouds. Several of them even seemed to be deliberately following the ships. The Deadly Nadder that Astrid—she herself!—had ridden was hanging close by the stern, as if keeping a watchful eye on her. Fishlegs' new Gronckle friend was even bolder; on the next closest vessel, she could see it actually sitting on the deck, cuddled up close to the chubby teenager.

As for the adults, most of them were watching the flying reptiles nervously, but no one seemed inclined to make any hostile moves as long as the dragons were unthreatening. Now that they had seen what could happen when dragons and Vikings worked together, there was a sense of uncertainty, a question of where to go from here.

Astrid wondered what Hiccup would think of the escort he was receiving—and then she smiled thinly. Of course, he would wonder what the dragons were thinking now—and that made her ponder the question herself. Maybe they were happy, savoring their first taste of freedom from the beast on Dragon Island. Maybe they were a little

confused, unsure of just what they were supposed to do with themselves, now that they were no longer slaves to the appetite of that creature's vast maw.

She wondered if the dragons knew just how similarly the Vikings felt, as they watched the first tentative crumbling of a centuries-old tradition of hate.

By the time Astrid stepped ashore on Berk, she could see Stoick already rushing away from the harbor, with the too-light, fur-wrapped bundle that was Hiccup in his arms. Toothless bounded close at his side—the Night Fury's presence more than enough to clear curious onlookers out of the chief's path. Gobber went along too, while someone else was sent to fetch old Gothi the seer, who possessed great knowledge of herbs and remedies for the sick and wounded.

Hurrying after Stoick and Gobber at a slight distance, Astrid was aware of the winged shadow that likewise followed her in the twilight. It was the Nadder. Now, perhaps—her Nadder?

Stoick carried Hiccup straight to his house. He disappeared inside—and Toothless uttered a bellow of distress when the door was slammed in his face. Astrid felt her heart break as the Night Fury pressed up against the wood, uttering mournful, lonely groans.

"Easy now, you—" Gobber gingerly edged around Toothless, trying to reach the door; but as he grasped the handle, Toothless raised his head and looked up. Astrid could not see the dragon's too-expressive features, but whatever was in his eyes then, it somehow caused the big Viking to sag and look as apologetic as he would toward a child.

"Sorry, big fella—but you'd only be in the way for now." After a small hesitation, Gobber stretched out his hand, and gently patted Toothless between the ears. "I promise, we'll take good care of him. You'll see him soon."

Toothless appeared to be slightly mollified. He uttered a deep, soft whine, but he did not try to push forward when Gobber turned and slipped into the house. Instead he curled up against the door, resting his head on the long tapered tail he had wrapped around his body.

With a leathery flapping, the Nadder alighted on the peak of the roof. Toothless eyed it, and then turned the same look upon Astrid as she approached the door, but he did not move.

Astrid didn't try to get around Toothless. While Hiccup's wound was being cared for, she realized she would also be an unhelpful distraction. Feeling perfectly useless, she sat down against the wall of the house, not quite an arm's length from the dragon on guard.

Gothi arrived a few minutes later, armed with her leather pouch full of arcane powders and oils. Seeing Toothless, the mute old woman looked surprised for just a moment; then she had only to raise an eyebrow at him, and he meekly slithered aside, granting her access to the door. After she entered, he immediately took up his post again.

Minutes lengthened. The sky grew dark, and the lights of the village began to flicker, mirrored by the emerging stars overhead. Astrid tried to distract herself by picking out familiar constellations, but her gaze kept drifting back to Toothless. He nuzzled his scaly cheek against the wood of the door, letting out a quiet, sad whine every now and then. Although he was visibly exhausted from the battle, she could see just as clearly that he was too anxious to rest.

"It'll be okay, Toothless," she found herself murmuring gently, in response to each despondent sound.

An age seemed to pass before the door opened again. Toothless quickly jerked upright, turning to face the doorway, removing the obstruction of his large lizard body.

Gothi emerged first, and went on her way. Her face was unreadable; yet the expression of Gobber, who stepped out after her, was thoughtful but not distressed. Astrid's heart leaped at the renewed hope that fact brought to her.

"How's Hiccup?" she asked urgently, scrambling to rise from the grass in the shadow of the wall.

Gobber smiled wanly, giving her a light pat on the shoulder. "Oh, don't you worry about him. Turns out he's a lot tougher than the spindly twig he looks."

Astrid drew a breath to reply, but before she could, her eye was caught by the movement of Toothless' sleek black form. He pressed toward the open door again, sniffing heavily as he detected the scent of his rider—but his path was barred by Stoick's broad frame in the doorway.

Reptile and man faced each other for a long moment. Stoick's expression was firm but quietly considering, while the Night Fury's eyes reflected only a determination as intense as his dragon fire.

After a long moment, Stoick moved aside without a word, and Toothless leaped past him into the house.

"Hiccup is still unconscious," the chief informed Astrid wearily, taking note of her in the darkness outside his door. "But you can see him, if you want to. I'll be out here, having a word with Gobber."

Her heart skipping a beat, Astrid followed Toothless, and Stoick drew the door shut behind her.

Inside the house, she immediately saw Hiccup on the bed, with a blanket tucked in warmly around him. Aside from the raw red patches of a few scrapes, his skin was very pale, even in the warmth of the firelight; but there was no sign of distress on his face, and his chest rose and fell with soft, steady breaths. In spite of the trauma his body had suffered, he looked so strangely—
peaceful.

Toothless had wasted no time settling himself on the other side of the bed. He lay on the floor, his wings folded tight in the confined

space of the house, pressing as close to the bed's wooden frame as he had to the door outside. His head rested on top of the blanket, where his scaly nose could almost touch Hiccup's limp hand.

Almost against her will, Astrid's eyes traveled farther down, to see the blanket sagging over empty space where flesh and bone was missing.

She didn't know why she felt compelled to do it, but she lifted the edge of the coarsely woven fabric and looked. There was nothing now but a mass of bandages below Hiccup's knee. The wrappings extended farther, halfway up his thigh, where tongues of flame had slipped through the gap in Toothless' protection and licked at Hiccup's flesh. It was plain to see that there would be scars beyond the amputation.

It would take Hiccup time to heal but he would heal. Looking at him now, Astrid had no more doubt of that.

She also had no doubt that he would ride among the clouds again.

On the other side of the bed, Toothless' tail lay stretched out along the floor. Astrid's eyes passed over the asymmetry at the tail's end, graced now with only one fin. Then they wandered back again, to Hiccup's own new void underneath the blanket; and her cheeks grew hot as she felt a mist of tears well up.

But not with an entirely sad emotion. There was also an unexpected pride, and a kind of warm affection she had never felt before.

"You'll be complete together," she whispered with a rueful smile, placing her hand on Toothless' head.

The throaty murmuring noise the dragon made sounded almost like an agreement. He snuggled his head a bit closer to Hiccup's hand, pressing his nose into the boy's palm, before he finally closed his eyes to rest.

Maybe the picture of Hiccup's sacrifice that Astrid had painted in her mind was a little too broad. Maybe this wasn't about him paying a price to change the Vikings' world, to shake them out of their obstinate resistance to new ideas. Maybe it was far simpler than that.

When Hiccup first shot Toothless out of the sky, he had inadvertently taken away the Night Fury's ability to fly freely. Now he himself had lost something too. It happened in the commission of a deed that could open a whole new world for Vikings and dragons alike but Astrid knew he had really done it all for his best friend.

Maybe there was a beautiful symmetry in that, after all.

* * *

><p>Â© 2014 Jordanna Morgan

End
file.